On a Misty Night in Paris

by

Laurent Paul Sueur

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Chapter I:
The violet-eyed man.

There is so much noise tonight. Usually, at nine, the Parisians are less restless: since they have finished working, they hurry home, have dinner, watch a stupid television program and go to bed. They leave the streets in a kind of appealing quietness that awaits the joyful embrace of the night-crawlers. The people who stroll along the streets of Paris at night are of a different nature: they are more relaxed. Most of them are tourists who are bedazzled by the theatrical atmosphere of a city that is not ugly. Some of them are suburbanites who do not really care about the architecture or the exoticism of that place. However, they are here for the same reason: amuse themselves.

Tonight the city is restless indeed; I can hear the sirens of the fire trucks and the police cars. Well, there must be a fire. Honestly, it is weird: here the buildings are not made of wood anymore. There were fires before, lots of fires, but, thanks to Lord Haussmann, medieval Paris was defeated by modernity: the 18th century's wooden skeleton yielded to the stony security of the following century. Hence, the recent fires do surprise me: how can one set fire to this bony

corset? It must be out of neglect: it is always imprudent to have a barbecue on a balcony!

Is it barbecue time tonight? I don't smell the exquisite scent of grilled meat. In Fact, it smells like… vice! I must follow that odor, for it is enticing. I truly fell like eating skewered meat. I should go to the Latin Quarter to eat some in a Greek restaurant. Besides, the smell comes from that part of the city. It is a quarter past nine; the firemen must be hungry too, but they are not heading for the Latin Quarter. Actually, the air smells like burned wood, as if there were a fire-camp.

Night is falling. People are making for the Île de la Cité. I follow them. There is a reddish light in that direction. Obviously, there is a big fire there. What is burning? What can burn over there? Don't tell me that the yellow-jacketed rioters have set fire to the Conciergerie! Hey, boys, this is not a prison anymore! A growing number of people are running toward the island. I cross the square that faces the town hall; the roof of Notre Dame is burning! I quicken my pace, cross Arcole Bridge and stop short: some policemen prevent the crowd from going any farther.

People are talking. I hear the same nonsense as usual: the Muslims, the government, the Jews, the CIA and the bankers are involved! What about the Martians? Don't be silly; everybody knows that they don't exist; it's the Venusians who did it! You often visit France. So you know today's French very well: they are so stupid that they believe that the earth is

flat! I would not call that decadence, for this nation has never been characterized by its intelligence. Since the end of monarchy, those people have been living in a misty world where illusion replaces reality. Most of all, they refuse to see themselves as they truly are; they prefer to distort the facts in order to make the other nation believe that they are good people. For instance, they tell you that they invented the human rights and forget to mention that they killed many innocent people during the Revolution and sent so many Jews to the concentration camps so that they might be assassinated. Their dishonesty is boundless and laughable. After the end of World War II, they pretended that France had been liberated by the French forces! Let us say that General De Gaulle, a dwarf among giants, needed to pose as the savior of France so that he might manipulate the voters and become the president of that country.

It is 10 p. m. and the roof of Notre Dame is burning. I can hear a clamor. Many people are praying. I am looking at the flames. I have never liked this eerie building because I don't like Gothic style. Actually, the Romans were right: the more columns, the more elegant the construction. Besides, Viollet-le-Duc's restoration transformed the venerable ruins into a sinister-looking building. I wonder how thew will use that space once the cathedral is destroyed. They should let nature climb over the bony remains of what seems to be the result of the carelessness of a worker or a shortcut. A rumor is spreading: the Muslims set

fire to the cathedral. Not so long ago, the French Catholics and Muslims did not hate one another. Sometimes I remember the time when Francis the first entered into an alliance with the Muslim Turks in order to fight the other European Catholic countries. It was a long time ago. Today the two opponents wait in ambush. It seems that the French barons are about to besiege Jerusalem again, but Notre Dame is not Jerusalem. Not son long ago, some Muslim girls tried to use gas cylinders to blow up cars that were parked near this cathedral; in 1995, a Muslim boy succeeded in igniting his explosives and killed some people, not so far away, on the other side of the river Seine, at Saint Michael Station. History stutters, for the wretched always end up taking revenge on those who do not allow them to get a job, integrate into society and respect themselves through the looking glass of social conventions.

The fire is getting worse; the skies are turning red; the hooters are yelling. I don't want to be a kind of ill omen, but it seems that God is punishing all the Parisians for their sins. In fact, I think that He has abandoned them. How could he help a bunch of jackasses? A yellowish halo is embracing this big campfire. All those people resemble Scouts. I regret to inform you that they are a bit ridiculous, for man is his own church: one can cry when one loses faith, not when a church burns.

A thoughtful man is watching all of this. Our eyes meet. His are weird. In fact, they are not blue but

violet. The people who see them seem frightened. They all manage to move off. I head toward him; his eyes are as pretty as transparent amethysts. It is the first time that I have seen such a thing. I am mesmerized by this improbable colour. Unlike the others, I am not afraid. The flames are dancing in the air; gold dust is scintillating in the purplish depths; I wonder who he is.

Chapter II:
Saint Michael Quarter at night.

This man intrigues me; he does not look like the others; his demeanor is much different; he is not one of those sheep that keep bleating instead of thinking first and, then, saying sensible things. I decide to follow him discretely. There must be something to discover. I don't know what I will find out, but I feel certain that it will be something unusual. He hurries away; I hasten my pace. He crosses Saint Michael Bridge and heads for Saint Michael Quarter. I can already smell the kebabs and other Greek delicacies. The stranger enters a Greek restaurant located on La Huchette Street. He sits around a table; I sit around another opposite his.

The waiter do not seem to be that Greek. He his a kind of Greek man who was born in Montpellier and raised in Créteil, which are exotic destinations too! The violet-eyed man puts on sunglasses. It's 11 p. m.; the only sun that shines is called the moon; its brightness cannot equal the one exhibited by the summer sun of Torremolinos at 2 p. m., when the German tourists sweat like pigs over paellas eaten in greasy spoons.

Waiter- What do you want to eat?

violet-eyed man- Could I have the menu?

Waiter- That's useless. It's eleven and there's not a lot of food left. You can eat kebab.

violet-eyed man- Isn't there anything else?

Waiter- No! You will have to hurry cause it's the end of the day and I want to go home.

violet-eyed man- So…

Waiter- So one kebab, a bottle of Retsina, no coffee, no dessert.

"The same for me along with the bill, please", said I in a gentle voice. You see, the Parisian waiters are wild animals one should never annoy. Should you disobey them, you would risk your life: they could refuse to serve you! Profit is a word they do not understand. Besides, do they really need to make more profit? In a touristic city like Paris, you can run the risk of loosing lots of customers, for those who remain will enable you to live well. This cornucopia is a major issue: it moves them to become psychopaths. When people work hard to earn their living, they come to understand that money is a factor that increases when the commercial relations between people are rational and based on respect and humanity. Trade is not theft.

The violet-eyed man leaves the restaurant. He takes Cluny Street and heads for La Sorbonne University. I can already see its threatening facade. What an ugly place! You see, I studied there. Well, I did not really study: I used to tell the teachers what they wanted to hear. Studies are an imposture, for one is ordered to repeat the stupid things the democratic societies need so that their faked world may continue existing. Ex-students become teachers; they must lead their pupils, who are future citizens, to believe that democracy is the best regime ever since it enables people to live in a peaceful world where wealth is equally distributed and where social positions depend only on competence! In universities, you just learn a dogma which leads the students to believe that the earth is flat again! Democracy is synonymous with dictatorship, the dictatorship of falsehood and mediocrity. It is a kind of madness; the worst one because it makes societies disappear.

We both walk along Saint Jack Street. I do detest that place. By the by, do you remember *Funny face*, a movie starring Fred Astaire and Audrey Hepburn? I do. Audrey Hepburn is a kind of snobbish book seller who worships the French existentialist philosophers. The movie portrays Jean Paul Sartre as a kind of ridiculous impostor. The American film directors of the 50's and 60's were not what I call intellectuals, but, although they were ordinary people, they had understood that this academic world was a fraud. I can assure you that nothing has changed since then.

Fortunately, there are books. One can always try to find the truth by means of this great counterpower.

We are reaching the Pantheon. The square is empty. I like Paris at night: there is no more noise, the stupid Parisians and suburbanites are asleep, one can stroll along the streets without being jostled by the crowd… He has removed his sunglasses. What a strange demeanor! Is the cathedral still burning? No, there is not enough wood, and the stones don't burn! A man passes by him; their eyes meet. The passer-by seems terrified. I halt. They are talking. I can almost hear them.

Violet-eyed man- What can you… in my eyes?

Passer-by- A stream of incandescent copper that carries away… deceased.

Violet-eyed man- … you in my eyes?

Passer-by- … can.

Violet-eyed man- What… doing?

Passer-by- I… burning… suffer.

Violet-eyed man- Why… there?

Passer-by- … don't know.

Violet-eyed man- … sinner.

Passer-by- Who are you?

Violet-eyed man- … the looking glass in which… future. I am… who you are. I am… judge you and condemn you to...

Passer-by- What am… do?

Violet-eyed man- … repent.

The violet-eyed man walks off. I follow him. It is getting stranger and stranger. The passer-by is petrified. I'd like to help and question him, but I must discover who the violet-eyed man is. We reach Mouffetard Street. He enters an old building. There's nobody in the street. They must be watching the news or sleeping. Who cares about Notre Dame? The door is still open; I hurry into the building. I examine the mailboxes; there are six of them, which means that there are two flats on each storey. I write down the six names and exit the house. There is light in one flat on the second floor. So, his name is either Paul Dubois or Jean Delorme. Gosh, these names and surnames are so ordinary; it will be difficult to get more information, all the more so because I feel certain that he is the kind of person whom people do not notice. You see, in big cities like Paris, people do not socialize; neighbors

don’t even know each other. I must keep on spying on him. But let’s go home: it’s late and I work tomorrow.

Chapter III:
Endless solitude.

It is 9 p. m. I am waiting for the underground train that will take me to Place Monge Station. There are not so many people on the platform: the Parisian ants have already gone home. A tramp is begging for money. I hand him one euro. I wonder where work has gone? Have the Chinese factories killed our industry? Have the Chinese workers slain ours? A society cannot survive with such a high rate of unemployment. Globalization has become the French citizens' scapegoat. They want to find the culprit. I Fear the Chinese are not the only culprits. Mechanization has a lot to do with unemployment. It created jobs, but it did not make up for the loss of the low-paid ones. Computers murdered the secretaries; machinery assassinated the factory workers. Not so long ago I visited a plant where they bottled drinking water. I was chocked: there was not a single human being in it! The whole process was automated. A mechanical noise made me recall that the French investors had overcapitalized the enterprises. Since they feared strikes and human costs and wanted to maximize profit, the money they had invested had begotten a robotized world. In short, man had paid robots so that they might kill man!

In agriculture, it's even worse. Five years ago I was in Cortijo Jacamón, in the very middle of

nowhere, a hamlet near Iznate, in the south of Spain, and I suddenly heard a strange noise that silenced the few birds that had not been killed by the hunters. I speeded up the car and discovered an incongruity: a machine that planted small mango trees! Even there, instead of employing people, they used robots to plant trees that do not want to grow because the soil is too shallow. They yield nothing and the farmers are on the verge of starvation!

The train has arrived; some gypsy girls are getting into the coach. They are pickpockets. It is said that they are the new middle class of Romania. In fact, they steal money from the Parisian suburbanites, who are not wealthy people, in order to buy a house or invest in their businesses in Romania. This is a new kind of class struggle, which Marx had not imagined: the poor steal form the poor!

I take the escalator, leave the subway station and walk along Mouffetard Street. I sit around a table near the window, in a café opposite the stranger's apartment. I order a soda water with mint syrup and wait for the object of my curiosity. I start drinking; the old building's door opens; I set my glass on the table, leave a banknote and exit the café; he exits the house. He makes for the underground station; I follow him: he is wearing his sunglasses. Where is he heading for? Who is he? I haven't found anything about him on the internet. I see the gypsy girls again. They are surrounded by policemen. We get into a coach on line 6. I wonder whether the European Union will collapse

or not. It was not a bad idea, but the members ended up dumping goods onto the European market, which impoverished the rich and did not make the poor richer. We have reached Blanche Station. Where are we going? He has not noticed me yet. Pigalle at night; what can you do in Pigalle at night? On Blanche Square, the tourists keep on taking pictures although there is not much light. The violet-eyed man enters the Moulin Rouge. What a strange idea for a Parisian! It is a tourist attraction; Parisians do not watch this kind of shows; they are for the Germans. I remember that, after the First World War, Harry Truman had found that thing extremely vulgar. Let's check Truman's opinion. I enter the cabaret and sit not far from him.

The show begins. The tourists keep eating, drinking, chatting and making noise with the cutlery. Tall and beautiful girls begin dancing. A singer warbles a song. The feathered hens are quite featherless tonight. They wiggle their hips. I thought they would fly. I am stupid; chicken can't fly; it's the geese that fly. They don't resemble geese but peacocks. Actually, they are peahens dressed as peacocks. Back then, they were bare naked. Today they are almost decently dressed. The stranger is fascinated by the show whereas I am bored. I feel as If I were a psycho-neurotic turkey in a chicken house: I want to pluck them all. One of the girls looks at me insistently; I blush. Our female contemporaries are

bold. You see, I am not the kind of man you think I am. She must be a man-eater, a praying mantis!

The show seems endless. I turn my head: the violet-eyed man has disappeared. I scan the hall: I don't see him. What kind of person leaves before the end? What kind of man dares to rise from table before dessert? I rush out; I don't see him either. I resolve to have a cup of coffee in a bar; I don't work tomorrow; I don't want to go home right now. I am going to enjoy the night. In April, the night temperatures are mild: I like to sit on a bench, look in the distance and see nobody. The Parisians are not moths; they lock up their stupidity at night. Solitude is a calamity everywhere; in Paris, it's a godsend, for you don't see the jerks, and the city seems almost pretty and livable. I sit in an armchair, order a coffee and start ruminating.

An hour later, the bold girl of the Moulin Rouge rouses me.

Girl- May I?

Narrator- Sure! May I offer you a drink?

Girl- I'd rather eat.

Narrator- What would you like to eat?

Girl- A croque-monsieur [toasted cheese and ham sandwich].

Narrator- You must be starving; it's 12 p. m. and you have danced the whole evening! Waiter! Bring this young lady a croque-monsieur.

Girl- You caught my eye when I was on stage.

Narrator- I did not know that the feathered dancers of the Moulin Rouge were birds of pray. You apparently like to devour men, but I am not a pigeon.

Girl- You are missing the point. You resemble one of our regular customers.

Narrator- Do I?

Girl- You were seated next to him. He has beautiful violet eyes.

Narrator- You must be joking!

Girl- I am not.

Narrator- Who is he?

Girl- I don't know. I just know that, when he removes his glasses, some people are frightened when they look at his eyes.

Narrator- Did you try to do so?

Girl- Yes, I did.

Narrator- Were you afraid?

Girl- No, I wasn't. I was almost absorbed by his hypnotic gaze.

Narrator- Do you know his name?

Girl- The cashier calls him monsieur Mayard.

Narrator- This is so weird.

Girl- I thought you were his brother, which is why I wanted you to tell me more about him.

Narrator- I am sorry to disappoint you, but I can offer you a glass of Champagne. Waiter! Bring us a bottle of Champagne.

Chapter IV:
Nightmares.

I go back home, wash and go to bed. I don't work tomorrow; I will return to Mouffetard Street and continue spying on the violet-eyed man. Do I resemble him? Why did she say that? My eyes are blue, not violet. I guess she was a bit intoxicated, or stupid, or both. I look at the ceiling; a strange shadow is beckoning me over; it looks like the white rabbit in *Alice in wonderland*. I won't enter its burrow; I know it wants to take me to a land of confusion. It is as mad as a March hare. The streets lamps are glowing; I close my eyes.

Nothing bad can take place in Paris at night. At night, the street lamps illumine the lonely people who strive to forget that there is so much noise, agitation, pollution and traffic during the day. Tonight the moon is shining. Federico García, is it made of silver? Will the gangsters fight along the banks of the Guadalquivir? There are no Spanish gypsies here…

Federico García- Laurent?

Narrator- Yes.

Federico García- There are outcasts!

Yes, the outcasts. People do not integrate into this society, which is disintegrating. Two masked men get out of a car. One of them shoots down a cleaner and rushes into a building. Where is it? It's not far from here. It's the head office of a satirical newspaper. They shoot at another man and start climbing the stairs. They bump into a girl. They seize her and force her to lead them to the room where the journalists are gathered. Freedom of speech is a dangerous weapon when it is exercised by stupid people. The girl dials a code; a door opens. The masked men go in. They shoot at the journalists. One of them say that they have insulted the prophet. Freedom of speech backfires when the things that are said are aimed at hurting people. It is the truth that must be the purpose of newspapers. Hatred leads to hatred. The bodies fall to the ground. There is no sanctity without truth.

Night has fallen. Three men are heading for the Bataclan Theatre. One of them shoots down a man at the entrance. They enter the concert hall. They start shooting at the spectators. The members of the rock band try to hide themselves. The three French attackers would like to kill the musicians. One of them say that they are doing this because the French president has harmed many Muslims all around the world.

Godefroy de Bouillon- Laurent?

Narrator- Yes.

Godefroy de Bouillon- The crusade is over. I have apologized for the crimes committed by our soldiers.

Narrator- Burn in Hell! Why did they slaughter all the inhabitants of Maarat al-Nouman? Apologies are useless; you had to prevent them from misbehaving. Seven centuries later we continue carrying the can.

The cobbles of Paris are bleeding. I loathe you all. The Germans themselves did not dare to behave in this fashion. In other parts of the world, the Christians, the Jews and the Muslims tried at least not to kill one another. Paris is not Jerusalem: there is nothing at stake. Montmartre is not Mount Zion. The Sacré Coeur still shows us that the sins committed by the Parisians were of a different nature: the poor were exterminated by the wealthy during the Commune. Paris is Gavroche's city: a place where poor children must die because they are poor. Paris must remain the place where Javert hangs the ex-con, Jean Valjean, on the gallows because he has stolen a loaf of bread in order to give food to his brothers. In Paris, you crucify the wretched, not the Christ! There is nothing holly here. Incidentally, the Muslim murderers were poor people too. They had tried for years to get a job and be part of the French society, but they had failed. Poverty and social isolation beget the monsters who are to slaughter the insane mother. For the time being,

the French do not want to face that truth. Denial is killing them slowly.

The clock rings. I open my eyes. My night was not peaceful. In fact, I did not sleep well. I get up and turn on the radio. I prepare a cup of chamomile and look for biscuits in the cupboards. What kind of disaster will the journalists announce? An epidemic, or a war, or cyclones, or earthquakes, or revolutions? Nothing of the sort; this morning, at 7, the police have discovered the mortal remains of a man in a corner of Tertre Square. Montmartre again! I must investigate this case, but I must wait for the night to come, for, during the day, the merchants and owners of street cafes or restaurants are too busy to answer the questions of inquisitive people. I will go there tonight.

Chapter V:
Montmartre at night.

Montmartre is the only Parisian spot that I like. In fact, the buildings are smaller. It is not the village it once was, but greenery has not disappeared yet. I particularly like the tinny little vineyard, the 2000 m2 of neatly lined-up vines that resist the attacks of concrete. Vines are not majestic plants, but their leaves are quite decorative. Besides, in winter, the defoliated stems give the impression that there are many deserted places here, which is wrong: Paris is an overcrowded city where grass must ask permission to grow. Much to my surprise, there are lots of animals in that stony setting. The pigeons and sparrows must have mistaken the buildings for the trees. The lost seagulls fish in the river Seine and the ducks bathe in the pound of the Buttes-Chaumont Garden. Nature seems to ignore the bony remains of man's restlessness.

So do I! At times, I mistake the Sacré Coeur for the snowy slopes of the Alps! I am not that mistaken, for, when it snows, the Sacré Coeur hill resembles Mont Blanc. The funicular turns into a ski tow; the tourists who slip and fall look like clumsy skiers. The children fashion sledges out of cardboard. The stairs, which are covered with snow, serve as bobsleigh tracks. I like snow and cold weather. I'd like to skate on the lake of the Bois de Vincennes, but the winter

temperatures are too high nowadays; it does not freeze anymore.

I draw up to the street cafe where they found the corpse yesterday and sit at a table.

Narrator- Waiter!

Waiter- Yes, sir.

Narrator- A glass of Champagne.

Waiter- Are you celebrating anything?

Narrator- Not really. I like Champagne, all the more so because they don't put too much sulfur in it.

Waiter- Is sulfur dangerous?

Narrator- Yes, it is. It acts as a trigger for asthma.

Waiter- Would you like to eat anything?

Narrator- No, thank you. By the way, what are those marks over there?

Waiter- I don't know.

Narrator- It is rumored that something awful happened yesterday.

Waiter- This morning, the police came and drew a line around the corpse. Then they took pictures.

Narrator- Eh, Eh! Did you know him or her?

Waiter- Everybody knew him.

Narrator- Was he that famous?

Waiter- The inhabitants of Montmartre knew him.

Narrator- Who was he?

Waiter- We called her Kiki.

Narrator- It's a dog's name! So the victim was a woman.

Waiter- Not exactly!

Narrator- What do you mean?

Waiter- He was a man who impersonated female personages. He was an artist. He worked in a cabaret called Ooh La La.

Narrator- It seems that all the inhabitants of the neighborhood are entertainers. Did he have enemies?

Waiter- Vaudevillians have no enemies, sir.

Narrator- Everybody has enemies. Man is evil. He loves to hate; he hates to love; why should he love since he can hate?

Waiter- We all liked him.

Narrator- He might have lead a double life. Dr. Jekyll used to become Mr. Hyde at night.

Waiter- Maybe, but Mr. Hyde killed people whereas Kiki sang Lily Marlene dressed like Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*.

Narrator- You know, his behaviour might have upset a few people. Perhaps there is a kind of Puritan who wants to rid the world of people like him. Don't you know a religious extremist who could have killed him?

Waiter- He has not been killed.

Narrator- Are you kidding me?

Waiter- The police said that he was terrified when he died. However, his death is natural: he died of a heart attack.

Narrator- Are you saying that he died of fright?

Waiter- Yes, I am.

Narrator- So, something or someone must have frightened him.

Waiter- It must be something.

Narrator- He suddenly behold his vices in a mirror and understood that he was a wicked person, which provoked a heart attack!

Waiter- Why not?

Narrator- Because Dorian Gray does not exist. Nothing leads people to understand who they are since they spend their lives refusing to acknowledge the truth. They close their eyes obstinately and, when they open them again, they are out of their minds. The weapon used by truth is madness.

Waiter- But who could have killed him?

Narrator- That's what I am asking you!

Chapter VI:
Dizziness.

The inhabitants of this country are not happy. There is a big protest on the Avenue of the Champs-Élysées. The protesters are wearing yellow safety vests. Darkness is falling; the trash cans are burning. Night is eyeing up violence and vice.

The policemen are nervous. The regime's watchdogs keep throwing tear gas bombs at the crowd. They thought that democracy would make them wealthier and happier. It is high time you became realistic. You want to earn a lot of money, but you don't want to work! The wealthy are convenient scapegoats. You accuse them of enslaving you, but you work thanks to them. Besides, it is they who ran the risk of loosing their investments while you did not dare to launch your own business, for you are a coward. Now you want them to pay for your lack of foresight. According to you, they can afford it. Unfortunately, their wealth consists of the shares of the societies they own and manage. What will you do with them? Sell them to pay off your debts, make their societies go bankrupt, destroy the production system, deprive many people of their jobs and, finally, engender more poverty. Brainless toad, look at yourself; you're just a petty bourgeois who accuses the others of perpetrating the crimes you have committed. You are a miser who wants both the poor

and the rich to disappear so that you may continue raving.

As the sun sets, the vermin leave the Avenue of the Champs-Élysées. Those who stay are much younger and less yellow. They always wear dark clothes. They start breaking the windows of the luxurious shops and restaurants that stand along the avenue. In a few hours, the images will be broadcast throughout the world. For the time being, the actors are rehearsing. Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, Troy is going to be attacked. Not so long ago, the French president said we were at the end of 30's again. Does he fear the far right? Those people are not planning a coup d'état! In fact, all this resembles the end of the Roman Empire. Empires do not last forever since they are composed of nations that do not really want to belong to the same political organization. The conquerors need a gigantic army to annihilate the tiniest desire to break loose. When invaders attack, the opposing forces seize the opportunity to recreate smaller political entities that are not homogeneous.

A group of masked young men hurl stones at the police. A policeman is injured. He falls. The attackers give him a beating. He does not move anymore. Some of them keep on kicking him. His colleagues try to pull him, but they fail. One of them takes a lighter from his pocket and sets fire to the clothes of the police officer. Cotton does not burn! The assailants attack a police car: they throw Molotov cocktails inside and prevent the policemen from escaping. Loads of young men

gather around the burning car; they shout: “everybody hates the police”. They are going to be burned alive. One can behold the fear in their eyes. One of them draws his gun and shoots at the lock. He kicks open the door, exists the vehicle and helps the others to exit it. The four of them are aiming their guns at the crowd. The masked men chant a dreadful slogan: “a good cop is a dead cop”. The mob hurls stones at them. “Kill them all”, says one of them. “kill the cops”, repeat the others. What is the cavalry doing? The police officers are panicking. Why don’t they use their guns? Because they have been given orders: they cannot kill a voter!

Who hides behind those masks? A kind of lumpenproletariat composed of the unemployed children and grand-children of the North-Africans who emigrated a long time ago. There are also some provincials who are as young and unemployed as the former. This age struggle, which is a class struggle, proves that the old have not fulfilled the task assigned by nature: raise the young, teach them how to behave in society, make them acknowledge their own limits and allow them to walk in their footsteps. These youngsters are striving to kill those who protect the old, who belong to the establishment. They want to grow up and must stab the bad wombs.

In the midst of that Greek tragedy, I catch sight of the violet-eyed man. What is he doing here? It seems that he strolls along the corridors of despair. What is he looking for? His transparent gaze unveils

the souls. Who is he looking for? All the sinners in the world? He is the Young Fate who tells people that they are about to die; he is the adamant judge to whom the extenuating circumstances do not exist; he is the truth that will send you to Hell.

Chapter VII:
The black cavalry.

They were born after the Second War World. It is inhumanity that gave birth to them. When sin pollutes the blood of the infant, his soul rots his whole life long and infects the youth of today. Were they born sick? No, they were born guilty! Their parents and society engendered monsters. But they cannot be guilty since it is not they who decided to become the apostles of Satan. Conscience does not depend on upbringing; it comes from willpower. In fact, all societies teach lies to children. However, at some point, the individual decides to compare that nonsense to the truths exhibited by nature. It is willingness that leads him to separate the wheat from the chaff and become an individual who thinks for himself. It is the individual who decides to become a reasonable human being, and reasons shows him how to be humane, which is the most reasonable behavior.

The fumes dissipate; the violet-eyed man starts walking. I follow him. He goes down the Champs-Élysées and takes no notice of the destruction caused by the rioters. A few facades burnt; almost all the shop windows shattered; the ground is covered with debris. I strive to walk and jump over the pieces of glass. The policemen have retired; so have the young suburbanites. A man age 70 or more and who is wearing a yellow security vest walks slowly along the

avenue. The violet-eyed man seems to follow him. Although I am short-sighted, I think that I know this old man. He resembles Jean, an ex-colleague who taught Spanish in the high school where I worked. He was an original creature, an ex-primary school teacher. He had been promoted to high school teacher, but he had never attended a college. He could not exhibit the humblest degree. The bad student had become a… bad teacher! Society cannot work when it is based on ignorance. I despised him, all the more so because he had never been to Spain! When I was next to his classroom, I kept saying Madre de Dios [good Lord] when I heard him speak Spanish.

Near Champs-Élysées Roundabout, Jean and the violet-eyed man turn right. There are very few passers-by now. Then they turn left and walk along the Petit Palais. They are heading for the Tuileries Garden. The linden trees do not allow me to see them well. I hide behind a tree. This time I can hear what they are saying.

Jean- Who are you?

Violet-eyed man- The violet-eyed man.

Jean- That's not a name.

Violet-eyed man- Nature bestowed that name upon me when man started to misbehave.

Jean- When was it?

Violet-eyed man- When he was born.

Jean- What do you want?

Violet-eyed man- I want you to look at my eyes.

Jean- You frighten me.

Violet-eyed man- Look at my eyes and tell me what you see.

Jean- I can see my past.

Violet-eyed man- When did you start to sin.

Jean- At the beginning, I suppose.

Violet-eyed man- No, you were not born a sinner but a blank page. Look closer.

Jean- A little boy is playing marble with friends in a school courtyard.

Violet-eyed man- It is you. You are six.

Jean- He is cheating.

Violet-eyed man- So, when did you start to sin?

Jean- When I decided to do so.

Violet-eyed man- That's right... Why did you continue sinning?

Jean- Because I thought that fantasy was better than reality.

Violet-eyed man- Because you did not want to understand the world; you refused to exercise your free will.

Jean- I chose to follow the main stream.

Violet-eyed man- You're not a sheep. Reason was bestowed upon you.

Jean- I refused to think for myself.

Violet-eyed man- What is the aim of a man's life?

Jean- I don't know.

Violet-eyed man- Why does the universe exist?

Jean- I don't know either.

Violet-eyed man- Look at my eyes again. What do you see now?

Jean- Myself.

Jean falls to the ground; the stranger leaves; I wait one minute and silently approach Jean. I call to him; he does not answer. I shake his arm; he does not move. I place my right hand on his neck to feel his pulse. I don't feel anything. He is dead! I look at his face. A moon beam illumines a visage that is terrified. Like the other man, he died of fright!

Chapter VIII:
Christmas Eve.

I wish it snowed. It is the 24th of December and the temperatures are quite high. I want to see some snow. So I decide to go to the Tuileries Garden in order to see, at least, a bit of ice: they have installed a small ice rink.

I cross Pont Neuf Bridge, turn left and go down Louvre boulevard. There are not so many people in the streets. They must be preparing the Christmas dinner. Earlier, the latecomers bought the last Christmas presents. The shop are closing. The street lamps illumine a few tramps who try to protect themselves from the cold of the night with pieces of cardboard. Christmas Eve is sadder than the other nights, for there is even less solidarity in the Christian world: the loneliness of the poor is more distressing underneath the dull light of the decaying society.

I walk down Rivoli Street, pass through the gate of Tuileries Garden and reach the ice rink. Some skaters are striving to remain standing on this slippery surface. I put on my ice skates and start skating. Then I spin slowly; I look in the distance; I am lost in thought; I feel a bit dizzy. I catch sight of the violet-eyed man. I have not seen him in a long time. What is he doing here. It's Christmas Eve; doesn't he have a family, or old parents, or children to take care

of? I exit the rink, remove my skates and resolve to talk to him:

He walks underneath the first row of linden trees. I head toward him; he hastens his pace. He enters the darkest part of the wood; I begin to run.

Narrator- Sir, where are you? I must talk to you… Sir?

Violet-eyed man- Yes.

Narrator- Who are you?

Violet-eyed man- What a strange question!

Narrator- I am asking a strange man a strange question.

Violet-eyed man- I never answer questions; I ask them.

Narrator- I have been spying on you for the last months...

Violet-eyed man- And what have you found?

Narrator- Absolutely nothing. It seems that you do not exist.

Violet-eyed man- I am as real as an idea. I don't need to see or touch me to understand that I am real. Are

you talking to someone who does not exist? Are you talking to yourself?

Narrator- I am not.

Violet-eyed man- Come closer and look at my eyes. You will see something even more real. … Tell me what you see.

Narrator- I see a purplish mirror that reflects my own image.

Violet-eyed man- Look deeper, through your own appearance. Tell me what you see now.

Narrator- I can see my future.

Violet-eyed man- Are you afraid.

Narrator- Why should I be afraid?

Violet-eyed man- All the people who look at my eyes see their past, not their future. You are not like the others.

Narrator- Who are you?

Violet-eyed man- I am the violet-eyed man. I am the one who enables people to understand who they are. I am the truth.

Narrator- Why do they die when they see who they are?

Violet-eyed man- They die because they understand that they are guilty. Vice is always freely chosen. When the truth illumines the image of lie, illusions shatter, pride sags and Dorian Gray burns in Hell.

Narrator- Are all men made of the same metal?

Violet-eyed man- They share the same nature, but each willpower fashions each individual. Man has only one power: decide who he wants to be. Good and evil are personal choices.

Narrator- Tell me, why does man exist?

Violet-eyed man- Because the universe exists.

Narrator- Why does the universe exists?

Violet-eyed man- You already know the answer since you are a part of the universe. It is reason that can lead you to find the answer; it is observation that must allow you to perceive what you must understand.

Narrator- What is the aim of a man's life?

Violet-eyed man- You must discover it.

Chapter IX:
The aim of a man's life.

I stop looking at his eyes. The stranger is bemused. I am puzzled. What is the aim of the existence of the universe? I leave him, reach Tuileries Boulevard and start walking along the banks of the river Seine. It's Christmas Eve; there's not a lot of noise, which is quite rare in this city; a tour boat makes the water shiver and glitter; I have always hated this place. There are far too many people. The most stupid people in this country come here, for, like stupid gnats, they think that they will be happier here: light attracts insects and idiots. I look up and behold the moon, which illumines the facade of the Louvre. I don't like the scenery either. It seems as real as a film set. Mr. DeMille, where are you? What kind of film do you want to shoot here? This overcrowded loneliness is a symptom of madness that will lead you to lose faith in man. The moon is much prettier.

I don't know why the universe exists. It's far beyond my understanding. It is so… perfect. The heavenly machinery is so geometrically perfect… And man exists! It is the imperfection that makes the infinite more remarkable. The numinous power of the stars move me to close my eyes and look beyond what is visible. I am walking down the alley of true perception; conscience is willing to crown the one who has decided to become a man.

I once was a barefooted child who fixed his eyes on the reality of the universe. It taught me how to discover the truth. I was in the midst of people who had resolved to be on the road to perdition. They were crawling like venomous snakes. They tried to bite me; it is I who bit them, for I wanted to turn their vitiated minds into gold. Oh boy, I failed! So I addressed the woman who seemed to be saner than the others. I used the language of reason to make her understand that she was mistaken. She aped reason to try to convince me that she was right. Madness cannot foul reason, for when the truth inhabits the mind of the reasonable man, the latter can thwart any kind of trickery. However, her dishonesty inflamed my wrath. All of a sudden, I wished to become a pillar of salt so that I might petrify all those sinners. I once again intended to straighten the twisted mind. Hence, I told her that she was building a wall of lies that would become an Ivory tower, but she continued building castles in the air. I added that her dreams would be her grave. She did not believe me; her friends and relatives began to avoid her; she was left alone. Man is his own warder; when a man goes crazy, he becomes is arch-enemy.

I know the aim of a man's life: to become a man. He must not remain a sort of incomplete creature. Nature mothered him. She decided to bestow willpower upon him. Willpower is an implement that allows him to become reasonable; reason is an

attribute of humanity; humanity leads people to form civilized societies.

Man is a singular creature. His nature is an eventuality, not an inevitability. The nature of a stone, a plant and an animal is bestowed at the beginning, and it does not change in the course of their existence. As for man, he was born a blank page. It is he who chooses to become a man or a monster. It is not nature who imposes her choices… When did I choose to become who I am?… I open my eyes and see the silvery moon's flickering halo. I remember… It was… when I was six. I was coming back form a ski holiday in the Alps. I was in a night train. When I awoke, I was unable to walk. I think that I did not want my legs to bear my weight. However, when my father lifted me, I decided to get up, walk and become an autonomous person who thought for himself. Why do some people refuse to make that choice? Why do they refuse to think, to open their eyes, to breathe, to become human beings? I still don't know.

I behold the glass pyramid in front of the Louvre. The temperatures are too high: it won't snow. It's Christmas Eve; I would like to see snow. A green parakeet lands next to me. I draw near to it. Our eyes meet.

Parakeet- What proves that you are a man?

Narrator- I can love and I still believe in man.

Parakeet- What proves that I am a bird?

Narrator- Nature has ordered you to ape me.

Parakeet- Stranger, who are you?

Narrator- I guess that I am the violet-eyed man...

Parakeet- Beware, the ape could dethrone you if the others refused to become human beings.

Narrator- What am I to do?

Parakeet- Open you amethyst eyes and keep on judging them: awareness is the key to salvation.